CHECK AND CONNECT DROPOUT INTERVENTION PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS AND PROPER AGE OF IMPLEMENTATION

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ABSTRACT

This study’s purpose was to investigate if the dropout prevention program, Check and Connect, was effective and what the proper age of implementation should be. When determining the effectiveness of the program and proper age of implementation the research will include a survey where the opinions of educators who participate in the program are expressed, interviews with neighboring districts that implement the program, and collection of quantitative data through national and state education websites. This investigation will look into three main components being truancy, dropout rates, and behavior incidents. It will collect data given the main objectives from other schools that implement the program and compare the outcomes to the school of study. Reasoning for student drop outs should be taken into account when developing a dropout prevention program along with a proper identification model for at-risk students. The results revealed that the program had been effective in decreasing at least one of the following, truancy, dropout rates or behavior incidents, which is what the Check and Connect program focuses on. The study also showed that at the primary school of study dropout rates had drastically decreased four years after the implementation of the program. Finally, a common consensus from surveys and interviews revealed that the best age for the program to be implemented would be at the middle school level.
INTRODUCTION

*Background issues and concerns.*

The high school dropout epidemic has been striking schools throughout the country and has created a major concern not only as to the direction of our country’s educational system but also where our nation’s society is heading. Nearly one fourth of freshman that enters into our nation’s public school system are dropping out and it is essential to find an effective prevention program (Mallette, 2012). It is important that we as a nation focus on our educational systems success which entails providing all individuals with the basic knowledge needed to become successful members of society. Dropout rates are failing to decrease and our school systems must question their dropout prevention methods, and at what age these programs should be implemented.

A rural public high school, hereafter referred to as MPS, has recently executed a new dropout prevention program within the past four years called Check and Connect. In order to determine the effectiveness of their dropout prevention methods one must examine: (a) The reasoning behind the students dropping out (b) The opinions of the individuals that must support the program to ensure successfulness; (c) Data reflecting results. This research will involve the responses to an online survey given to twenty-one faculty and staff members of MPS. The analysis will identify the attitudes and ideas relating to the check and connect program with which they are directly involved. This project will also differentiate between three schools that currently use the program using three statistics that represent the program’s effectiveness.

*Practice under investigation.*
The practice under investigation will be looking at the effectiveness of the Check and Connect dropout prevention program. The study will explore the proper age of implementation of the program as well.

*School policy to be informed by study.*

Every public school is required by law to report secondary students who drop out of school to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for any reason other than to attend another school, attend a college or university, or enlist in the armed services. If there are dropouts reported, a proper prevention program should be initiated to ensure our educational system is doing everything possible to get students to graduation. The study will inform the current policy of by highlighting the dropout prevention programs implemented at schools with students who have been reported as dropouts.

*Conceptual underpinning.*

Our educational system concentrates on providing students with an education that will help them become productive members of society. Whenever students are unable to complete high school they lack the essential skills to thrive in the world. Reasoning for dropouts can be attributed to many different things, some of which may include lack of motivation, home life, abuse of drugs and alcohol, pregnancy or falling behind in classes. Due to high school dropouts schools have provided dropout prevention programs for years. At-risk students have shown that they need extra support to succeed therefore, they are the students placed in prevention programs. Check and Connect focuses on identifying at-risk students and supporting them using a mentoring program. The development of Check and Connect took five years and was finally implemented in public schools in 1996 (Alvarez & Anderson-Ketchmark, 2010). The main goal of the Check and Connect program is to promote student engagement in schools through four
main components: a mentor, monitoring process, individualized intervention and enhancing communication between school and home. Although the success of the student depends on the specific circumstances, Check and Connects idea is if schools can promote student engagement then schools can decrease student dropouts. Age of implementation of any dropout prevention programs is crucial so that we do not allow students to fall through the cracks. Students are becoming more vulnerable to their environment, individuals that are bad influences and personal distractions that may affect their lives negatively at earlier ages.

Statement of the problem.

If the dropout rates have not decreased within three years after implementation of the Check and Connect program then the program’s effectiveness must be assessed. Due to increasing dropout rates there is a possibility that we are not reaching students early enough to prevent dropouts.

Purpose of the study.

The purpose of this study is to determine if the Check and Connect program is an effective dropout prevention program through looking at data, educators opinions and comparing multiple schools program structure through interviews. Another purpose is to identify what the proper age of implementation for the Check and Connect program is.

Research questions.

RQ#1: Is the Check and Connect program an effective program dropout intervention program at the Maryville School District?

RQ#2: At what age would it be most beneficial to initiate the Check and Connect program within the Maryville School District?
**Definition of terms**

ELL- English Language Learners, a student whose first language is not English are in an classroom specific to students for learning English.

DESE- Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

NCES- National Center for Education Statistics

**Summary.**

MPS is a rural high school which uses the Check and Connect dropout intervention program. Since the implementation of the program in 2009 there has not been a steady decrease in dropout rates and this causes individuals to question the effectiveness of the program. With the constant change in society and students being exposed to negative things at younger ages one might also question if the age of dropout intervention methods should be decreased. This research will investigate the program’s effectiveness and its proper age of implementation. This research also investigates the attitudes and opinions of faculty and staff that are directly related to the program.
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The high school dropout crisis has been going on for a number of years however, with the change in society and all the new advancements we have in our educational system it is intolerable that this crisis has not ceased. Graduation rates throughout the US are at 75% and have been for the past 45 years (Mallette, 2012). Peter Drucker said, “Schools need to change and begin to prepare students for the “world of tomorrow” (Cassel, 2003, p. 649). It is not doubtful that our world is changing, but the effects that dropouts have and will continue to have on our society cannot be overlooked. High schools around the country have strived to increase graduation rates through dropout intervention programs for a number of years. A great way to examine the dropout epidemic and prevention methods is to look at causes, effects, and possible new intervention techniques for at-risk dropouts.

Causes of dropouts stem from a number of different areas. It is important to be able to identify students who are at-risk for dropping out and place them in the correct intervention program for support. Although 97% of teachers in a North Carolina high school were confident they could identify at-risk students, only 50% of these teachers correctly identified all of the characteristics deemed as contributing to at-risk behavior. A few of the at-risk behaviors identified in the survey included excess absenteeism, low self-esteem, low reading skills, rebelliousness, and failing grades (Fitzgerald, 1990). Along with identifying at-risk students it is important that teachers focus on interacting with the students: providing praise and encouraging them when needed. In an urban school with a 40-60% dropout rate it was found that the student-teacher interaction was minimal and students were often pushed out of the school instead of encouraged in stay in school (Knesting, 2008). Lack of proper recognition for student’s accomplishments was also found to be a reason students dropped out.
Another cause for dropouts was determined to be lack of personal development. A personal development test (PDT) was administered to 1,005 incarcerated juvenile delinquents and adult prison inmates. This was the group tested because, of the two million prison inmates in America, one million are high school dropouts (Cassel, 2003). Following the test a comparison was made between the scores of the 1,005 inmates and 2,131 typical individuals. The comparison revealed that every single PDT score displayed that there was a significant lack of personal development for those inmates. From this study it was suggested that the PDT be given to every individual entering high school and those scoring below the appropriate norm be placed in a dropout prevention program (Cassel, 2003).

Our nation has a rapidly growing student population of English Language Learners (ELL) in U.S. elementary and secondary schools. Although being ELL is not a cause for dropouts, Latin students are the largest population of ELL students and the Hispanic population make up the largest percent of dropouts by ethnicity at 47% (D'Otreppe, Glenn, Hsu, & Johnston, 2011). It is generally known that the ELL population is at risk of dropping out; however, there is no direct statistical data available on the dropout rate in the ELL population (Sheng, Sheng, & Anderson, 2011). Factors that contribute to a heightened risk for dropping out in the ELL populations include a low English proficiency, low socioeconomic status and cultural differences. Because ELL students are known to struggle careful monitoring should be done for those students throughout the year.

Many times it is difficult for students to identify what consequences their actions may have for not preforming well in school until it is too late and they lose hope to graduate. June (Kronholz, 2012) stated that students often get “backed” up and they become disconcerted or self-conscious and fall even further behind. As expressed by Tyriq Jones who is an eighteen year
old dropout, “I got in trouble. I was playing around. I got backed up in high school.” (Kronholz, 2012, p. 17). When students get behind in school during their freshman year it is incredibly difficult to recover and many times student do not have the persistence it takes. Teen pregnancy is the number one reason females dropout of high school in the U.S. Upon dropping due to pregnancy three of every four teen age mothers will receive public assistance after their first child (D'Otreppe, Glenn, Hsu, & Johnston, 2011).

Dropping out negatively affects the lives of the individual and also affects society tremendously. As stated above dropouts make up one of the two million inmates incarcerated in US prisons today. Because of this data we can contribute lack of education to crime. For high school dropouts it is more difficult to obtain a decent job which causes them to commit crimes in order to support themselves and these crimes directly affect society. The unemployment rate for dropouts is nearly twice the rate of the rest of the workforce (Knesting, 2008). When we are forced to incarcerate individuals we are taking away manpower from the society. As stated by R.N. (Cassel, 2003), high school principals need to take immediate action to prevent dropouts before there are a lot of inmates without trust, credibility and manpower.

The creation of the alternative school is one of many responses to the dropout crisis. When considering alternative schools that have been created for students who cannot meet standards in regular settings student retention is extremely challenging. An alternative school often deals with academically low-preforming students, pregnant or parenting youths and students with discipline problems. A case study was done on a new program implemented to reduce the number of dropouts at Bryant alternative school in Virginia which has an average dropout rate of 60% (Conner & McKee, 2008). The program focused on helping students find personal motivation, mentoring students and collecting data on previous students to determine if
their demographics had an effect on them staying in school. The school concluded that although the new program gave insight into why students dropout it could not overcome poverty, teenage pregnancy or the achievement gap (Conner & McKee, 2008). Another alternative program, Performance Learner Center (PLC), is an online school for students at-risk for dropping out. It began in the early 1990’s as a way to challenge students who needed more rigor, but is now used to help students who struggle in the regular school setting (Kronholz, 2012). The program has been incredibly successful with 96% of students passing their Virginia end-of-course exams (Kronholz, 2012). The PLC receives the same funding per student as any other public institution and the majority of the costs go to covering the online program fee.

In order to reduce dropout rates and increase graduation rates schools must do five things: redefine high school success, provide incentives to schools to educate all students, build capacity within the educational system, work harder to desegregate schools and strengthen families and communities (Mallette, 2012). In order to achieve these five things participation of our schools and communities are required.

Dropout intervention programs provide an in-house alternative for tackling the dropout problem. There are a number of different programs all with the same goal: get students to graduation. Check and Connect is one of these dropout intervention programs used in the regular school setting. Check and Connect was developed from 1990-1995 using federal grants and initially used in 1996 (Alvarez & Anderson-Ketchmark, 2010). This program was originally developed to help prevent special education students from becoming drop-outs, but now the program is being used to engage all at-risk students at the elementary and secondary level. The main goal of the Check and Connect program is to promote student engagement in schools and reduce drop-out rates. The program has four main components which include, mentoring,
monitoring, individualizing and enhancing communication between home and school (Alvarez & Anderson-Ketchmark, 2010). A Whatworks Clearinghouse study indicates that middle and high school students enrolled in Check and Connect are more likely to stay in school. The cost of the program is inexpensive; the training costs $545 per school team, which includes the implementation program manual, but you may also purchase an implementation manual for $45 by itself (Alvarez & Anderson-Ketchmark, 2010).

For decades dropout intervention programs and alternative schools have been used to reduce dropouts in our nation’s high schools. The majority of these programs are implemented when students start high school, from the ages of 14-16. The age of implementation of the program is crucial to the success of the student and it is believed that a younger age of implementation would decrease dropouts. Twenty one faculty and staff members were surveyed and asked what they believed the proper age of implementation for Check and Connect was and the results yielded that elementary and middle school ages were the best times of implementation in their opinions. It was also a common consensus from interviews with neighboring school districts of MPS that Check and Connect should be implemented at the middle school level. Studies have shown that if schools are unable to correctly identify at-risk students in their time of need then they run the risk of failure due to lack of support (Fitzgerald, 1990).
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY & DESIGN

Research design.

A non-experimental one time survey provided both qualitative and quantitative data which revealed the opinions of faculty and staff at MPS who are currently participants in the Check and Connect dropout prevention program. The survey was created through survey monkey and was distributed to the faculty and staff at MPS through email. The email explained that completing the survey was voluntary and a confidentiality statement was included. Of the forty one faculty and staff at MPS that were emailed the survey, 21 (51%) completed it. The twenty-one participants voluntarily completed the survey within the one week time period allowed. The survey consisted of eight questions that related to the effectiveness of the program, reasons for dropping out and the proper age of implementation of the Check and Connect program. Another piece of qualitative data collected was interviews with faculty in two schools located near to MPS who also use the Check and Connect program. The interviewees were first asked if they were willing to complete the survey and then the interview was conducted over the phone. The interviews addressed the methods of use of the Check and Connect program and how it was structured at the other schools in order to compare with implementation of Check and Connect at MPS.

Quantitative data was collected using the DESE database. Truancy, dropout rates and behavioral incidents were collected for MPS and the two other schools using the Check and Connect program. These areas will be considered in depth because they are the basis of the Check and Connect program philosophy. Other quantitative data collected from DESE and NCES will be used to compare the national dropout average, Missouri dropout average and MPS dropout rates.
Study group description.

The study group for this project consisted of twenty one faculty and staff members from MPS who participated in an online confidential survey pertaining to the Check and Connect program. It also included counselors from two neighboring schools of MPS (labeled below as NN and SN) interview responses. MPS district serves 1,438 students in five different schools and MPS makes up 474 of the students in the district. NN district serves 226 students the middle and high school(grades 6-12) there are 112 students. SN district serves 193 students and 88 of those students are present at the middle and high school, grades 6-12 (Great Schools, 2013).

Data collection and instrumentation.

An anonymous online survey was used to collect qualitative and quantitative data from the faculty and staff at MPS. There were seven selected-response items ask about participant factors and for opinions about the dropouts and use and effectiveness of the Check and Connect program. One open-end item allows participants to express what they believe the strengths and weaknesses of the program to be. The survey was accessible from March 19, 2013 to March 25th, 2013. Questions in each of the participant’s surveys were completely identical. The survey is in appendix A located at the end of the paper. Interviews were also conducted with faculty from two neighboring school districts in regards to implementation of the Check and Connect program in their schools. Interview items sought answers such as when the program was first implemented, at what age are students placed in the program, how are at risk students identified and how often do they monitor student progress. The full list of interview questions is in appendix B located at the end of the paper. Quantitative data was collected from DESE website regarding dropout rates at MPS, state and nationwide.

Data analysis methods.
There was no specific statistical analysis needed for this research; however, Microsoft Excel was used to display the totals from the survey and when displaying other research conducted.
FINDINGS

An online confidential survey was conducted to determine the opinions of the educators who participate directly with the Check and Connect program at MPS. The questions relate to the effectiveness of the program, reasons for dropouts and the proper age of implementation of the Check and Connect program. The responses of the survey provide valuable opinions which help in determining the program’s effectiveness. There were also interviews conducted to compare the Check and Connect program structure at two schools located near MPS. Quantitative data was collected to compare the truancy, behavior incident and dropout rates at each of the three schools. These three areas were evaluated because they are the areas which the Check and Connect program focuses on decreasing (University of Minnesota, 2013). By comparing the schools data along with the information given during the interviews the study will show what schools seem to be achieving the goals set out by Check and Connect and which do not. National and MPS dropout rates were also quantitative data collected to see how MPS dropout rates compared to the national average. If the Check and Connect program is successful then the dropout rates should be well under the national average. The following charts, tables and graphs below represent the findings through a confidential online survey given to MPS faculty and staff through email, interviews conducted and quantitative data collected online through DESE and NCES. Of the forty one faculty and staff at MPS that were emailed the survey, 21 (51%) completed it. The survey data was collected from the 21 staff members at MPS from March 19-March 25, 2013. The interview data was collected from two phone interviews conducted on April 2nd, 2013 and my personal experience through observation of the Check and Connect program structure at MPS during the fall 2012 semester.
Survey Findings

Figure 1

The Check and Connect program is based on having contact with students and building relationships between teachers (mentors) and students (mentees). Figure 1 shows that the vast majority (76%) of educators at Maryville surveyed have interactions with their student mentee at least twice a week. The remaining 24% of the staff said that they either met with their mentees once a week, once every two weeks, once a month or they were not applicable. Two of the individuals who responded to the survey are not currently serving as mentors for the Check and Connect program. These teachers were either not assigned a mentee because there were not enough students in the Check and Connect program or they were in their first year of teaching and did not qualify to be assigned a mentee. The goal set by MPS was for 100% of mentors to have interactions with their mentees at least twice a week in order to build a strong relationship. Seventy-six percent of those surveyed met the goal.
The educators who directly participate in the program were asked their opinion on how successful they found the program. Figure 2 indicates that of twenty-one surveyed, only one participant said they found the program 100% successful. The 71% majority believed that the program was a four (4) or approximately 80% successful. Three individuals believed it was a three (3) or approximately 60% successful and the remaining two individuals believed it to be a two (2) or approximately 40% successful. No one marked the program to be a one (1) or approximately 20% successful.
Figure 3 represents what those surveyed at MPS found to be the biggest contributor to dropouts. Factors that contribute to dropouts can vary immensely depending on the location of the school district and it is important to keep in mind that this survey came from educators in a rural school district. Figure 3 displays that none of the teachers identified class difficulty or substance/teen pregnancy as reasoning for students not completing school. The majority with 66% of those interviewed concluded that home life was the biggest contributor to students dropping out. Although Check and Connect cannot change student’s home life it does focus on improving relationships with home and school. Thirty four percent believed that students dropping out were contributed to lack of motivation or because students were falling behind in classes.
The Check and Connect program at Maryville high school allocates time in each professional development day to collaborate in groups of 5-6 teachers from different concentrations about the status of each of their mentees. Figure 4 represents how productive mentors found the time used for Check and Connect during professional development days. Figure 4 shows that only 10% of the staff surveyed didn’t find this time productive at all; however, it’s important that all participants believe time is used wisely if the district is allotting time in the professional development days. About half (52%) of students found the time used to be moderately productive. Then the remaining 38% of students found the time used to be very productive. The ultimate goal is that all individuals involved in the program feel the time spent during professional development days toward the program is very productive.
Figure 5 shows the opinions of those surveyed at MPS on when they believed the proper age of implementation of the Check and Connect program was. The majority of teachers surveyed from MPS believed that the program should be implemented at the middle school level (ranging from 5th-8th grade). Figure 5 displays that seven of the twenty-one surveyed (33%) believed that the program should be implemented at the elementary age. The majority of teachers from MPS (52%) believed that the program should be implemented at the middle school level. Less than 15% surveyed believed Check and Connect should be implemented at the high school level.
Currently at Maryville there is no classroom time being devoted to the Check and Connect program and teachers (mentors) meet with their mentees whenever there is free time. Figure 8 reveals that 71% of participants in the survey felt that there was enough time devoted to the program and no more school time should be used. The remaining 29% believed more time should be devoted to the program.

The qualitative question allowed the study to take the opinions from the twenty-one individuals surveyed and find common trends about what they found to be successful and unsuccessful about the Check and Connect program implemented at their school. Each individual answer varied; however, some of the common trends were that students gain comfort in knowing someone cares about them, mentors cannot overcome mentees outside influences, the program needs to teach students skills to use on their own, training of mentor (need more training), grade checks are good, and collaboration during PD days is successful. The things that are considered successful should continue and the areas deemed as not successful should be evaluated by all faculty to either eliminate that part of the program or make improvements.
Interview and Qualitative Findings

Figure 7

Figure 7 represents the dropouts by year at MPS and the two other schools near MPS that have implemented the Check and Connect dropout prevention program. Dropout rates of each school were compared because this was one of the four school aspects the Check and Connect program aims to decrease. The Check and Connect program was implemented in MPS in 2009 and the dropout rates first decreased then increased and then decreased drastically. However, from 2007 to 2012 there has been a vast decrease from 13 students that dropped out in 2007 to only three students in 2012. In SN the Check and Connect program was also implemented in 2009 which may have been attributed to the two students that dropped out in 2008 after there had been zero dropouts for the previous four years. After implementation at SN there were zero dropouts until 2011 when there was one and then in 2012 there were zero dropouts again. NN Check and Connect program was implemented in 2009 and through 2012 there was a decrease that may be attributed to the program. MPS’s dropout rate in comparison with the national average varies from being below or above the national average. The nation suffers from a
dropout epidemic and many schools cannot successfully implement a dropout program; however, MPS implements Check and Connect and after one year of the program the schools dropout rates were below the national average. Data for 2011 and 2012 have not yet been uploaded to the NCES website therefore saying the program has successfully decreased dropouts below the national average cannot be stated.

Figure 8

![Attendance Chart](chart.png)

Figure 8 above represents the attendance rates in terms of percentages at the three schools in the study (MPS and two surrounding schools that use the Check and Connect program (SN and NN) and also the overall Missouri average. Attendance is another aspect that Check and Connect aims to increase. The MPS attendance increased at a steady rate after implementation from 2009-2012. At SN attendance fluctuated after the program was implemented; therefore, there is no evidence that the program decreased truancy. NN remained the same after the first year the program started and then increased in 2011 and decreased slightly in 2012 therefore, there is also no evidence the Check and Connect program successfully decreased truancy in this school.

When comparing the nation average attendance rate to MPS it is shown that MPS was above the

Figure 9

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
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<th>NN</th>
<th>SN</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
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<td>2006</td>
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<td>2007</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>4</td>
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Figure 9 represents the behavior incident reports from the years of 2004-2012 for the three schools of study. MPS shows no steady decrease in the years after implementation of Check and Connect from 2009-2012. NN decreased from one to zero dropouts from 2009 to 2010 and remained at zero for 2011 and 2012, this shows that Check and Connect may be attributed to the decrease. SN fluctuated after implementation of the program however; there was a steady decrease from 2010-2012. Overall, the data demonstrates that Check and Connect has decreased incidents in NN and SN but not MPS.

Interviews:

The interviews conducted with school staff from two schools besides MPS that implemented the Check and Connect program showed common tendencies in how the program was implemented within each school which could be related to the quantitative data in figures 8,9 and 10 to determine the programs successfulness.
NN: The Check and Connect program starts being used at the high school level. Because the school district is relatively small it is easy to identify students that are at-risk and place them in the program through conversations with their previous school counselors. Students are also identified after the first quarter by teachers if they seem to be struggling in school. There is not a set time for students to be monitored at the high school and their progress to be collaborated on however, a Check and Connect supervisor comes in about once a semester to help mentors properly implement the program. The program was described as being relatively relaxed within the district.

SN: The Check and Connect program begins at the middle-high school level for grades 7 to 12. At-risk students are identified when students enter the school and throughout the years if students seem to start to struggle in school. Faculty meetings are used to discuss students’ progress and go through discipline. Students are assigned to the teacher they have seminar with. Students’ progress within the program is discussed during PD days at least once a semester.
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The dropout epidemic is without a doubt a huge problem for our schools and our society and implementing a successful dropout prevention program may be the key to this problem. Developing a successful dropout prevention program involves correctly identifying at-risk students, selecting the correct program ‘fit’ for your school and monitoring the progress of the program. The check and connect dropout prevention program has been implemented in numerous schools throughout the country and has shown to be successful. This study in particular focused on a relatively small high school of 474 students which started to implement the program in 2009. The findings showed many different things in regard to the program at the school of study. Through surveys the majority believed that the proper age of implementation was the middle school grade level. Interviews with faculty and staff at the two surrounding schools, SN and NN, also concurred that middle school is the ideal age for the program to be implemented.

The second question that the study addressed was, is the program effective at MPS. Check and Connect program focuses on increasing student engagement by decreasing four areas: truancy, dropout rates, behavior incidents and tardiness. Three of these four areas were looked at closer at MPS and two other schools, SN and NN, which are located near MPS and also implement the check and connect program. Data regarding truancy, dropout rates and behavior incidents were collected through the DESE database for each of the schools. The data revealed that attendance at MPS had steadily increased after the implementation of the program in 2009, which shows that the program was effective in reducing truancy. Secondly, the data revealed that behavior incidents fluctuated after the implementation of the program and ultimately did not decrease from 2009 to 2012; therefore, the program was unsuccessful in this area. For SN,
incidents did not occur until from 2004-2008, then in 2009 there was one dropout which may have been attributed to the reasoning of the start of the program. Finally, the data showed that dropout rates had decreased from 11 students in 2009 to three students in 2012 therefore; the program was successful in that aspect. In NN the dropout rate decreased from three to zero students from 2009 to 2012 after implementation.

Common trends found from both SN and NN was that the implementation of the program was relatively relaxed and students were easily identified as being at risk because they were both considerably small schools. The NN school showed success in decreasing truancy, dropout rates and behavior incidents after the implementation of the program; this may be attributed to the fact that they had a supervisor come in and train teachers on the program at least once a semester. All three schools in the study showed some success in at least one of the areas Check and Connect targets which indicates they are on the right track considering this program works on long term effects and many times takes years to show a dramatic decrease in dropouts.

At MPS this program has been found effective through surveys, interviews and a collection of quantitative data. A recommendation for MPS would be to decrease behavior incidents by using some of NN tactics such as having a supervisor come in and train staff on the program. Sixty-six percent of MPS surveyed staff stated that home life was the biggest contributor to students dropping out; therefore, there should be a home contact requirement throughout the semester which may also decrease behavior incidents.
REFERENCES


Appendix A

Online Survey Questions

1. How often do you meet or have interactions with your Check and Connect mentee?

☐ 2-5 Times a week

☐ Once a week

☐ Once every two weeks

☐ Once a month

☐ N/A

2. On a scale of 1-5 (5 being the most successful) how successful do you think the Check and Connect program is?

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5

3. In your opinion what is the biggest contributor to dropouts?

☐ Class difficulty

☐ Home life
☐ Falling behind in classes
☐ No motivation
☐ Substance abuse/Teen pregnancy

4. Do you find the time used during professional development days for the Check and Connect program productive?
☐ Very productive
☐ Moderately Productive
☐ Not Productive

5. How old are you?
☐ 20-25
☐ 25-30
☐ 30-40
☐ 40-50
☐ 50+

6. At what grade level do you think the Check and Connect program should be implemented?
7. Do you think there should be more school time devoted to the Check and Connect program?

☐ Yes

☐ No

8. What aspects of the Check and Connect program at MHS are successful in your opinion and which are not?
Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. When was the Check and Connect program first used at your school?

2. How are individual students (mentees) paired with teachers (mentors)?

3. How do you identify at-risk students that need to be placed into the program? At what age do you identify them?

4. How do you monitor student progress? A grade sheet? Meetings with mentor?

5. Does staff collaborate with one another about Check and Connect mentees and how to get them to be successful in school?

6. Does your school participate in any seminars that give more information over the programs structure and how to make it successful?

7. Are there requirements to become a mentor? (Must have at least a year teaching experience, etc.)

8. How often do you encourage mentors to have contact with mentees?

9. Can you describe the structure of your program?